

"Japanese C-Store Firms to Run Online Supermarket"
C-Store Central (01/14/00)

Tokyo, Japan--Japanese convenience store operator Sunkus & Associates Inc. confirmed it has entered into a joint venture with five other companies to launch an online supermarket, according to wire services. e-Convenience Co. will be based in Tokyo. Speedy Group Co., an information and communication-related business planning company, will have a 50% stake; Sunkus, 20%; and the remainder will be held by Softbank Investment, Hikari Tsushin Inc., Uny Co., and Circle K Japan Co.

The company will deliver goods ordered over the Internet, by telephone, and by fax to private homes, starting in April. e-Convenience, which also will deliver boxed lunches to corporate patrons, hopes to have 10,000 customers its first fiscal year, Sunkus said. Three years out, it projects some 150,000 customers. Patrons will be able to pay with credit cards, bank transfers, or payments at participating convenience stores. The cyber-supermarket should not negatively compete with the principals' brick and mortar convenience stores, said Sunkus President Takaya Kittaka. e-Convenience targets a different market: "housewives busy with raising families or work, and thus are too busy to go shopping, as well as elderly customers who are unable to go shopping themselves," the partners said in a joint statement. In fact, future e-Convenience deliveries could be made from Sunkus stores, Kittaka said.